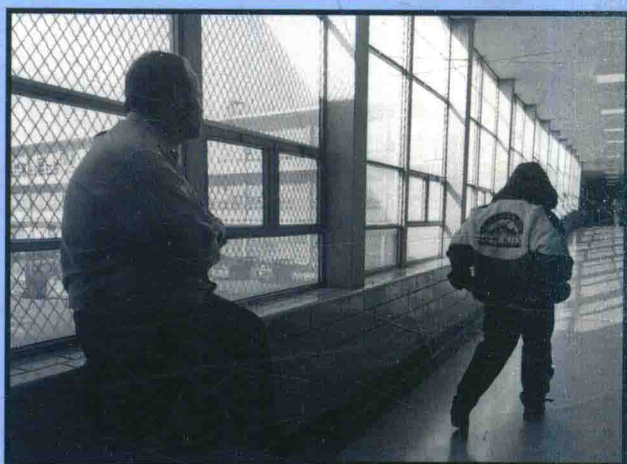


# TRAVELS *through* CRIME *and* PLACE

**William DeLeon-Granados**

Community  
Building as  
Crime Control



# Travels through Crime and Place

---

**Community Building  
as Crime Control**

---

William DeLeon-Granados

Northeastern University Press  
*Boston*

Northeastern University Press

Copyright 1999 by William DeLeon-Granados

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without written permission of the publisher.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

DeLeon-Granados, William, 1964-

Travels through crime and place : community building as crime control / William DeLeon-Granados.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55553-420-1 (cloth : alk. paper).—ISBN 1-55553-419-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Crime prevention—United States—Citizen participation.

2. Community development, Urban—United States. I. Title.

HV7431.D454 2000

364.4'3'0973—dc21 99-33755

Designed by Joyce C. Weston

Composed in Sabon by Wellington Graphics, Westwood, Massachusetts. Printed and bound by Maple Press, York, Pennsylvania. The paper is Sebago Antique, an acid-free sheet.

Manufactured in the United States of America

03 02 01 00 99 5 4 3 2 1

## Travels through Crime and Place

*For my mother, brother, and sisters,  
in whose company I found a passion  
for justice and accord*

# Acknowledgments

The people who appear in this work, whether in their own name or in an invented one (to protect their privacy), provided more than their stories and, in some cases, even their homes. They became a buffer against the loneliness and grind of my travels and helped me realize how rapidly community and connection can form between strangers. My hope is that their input may help improve community everywhere.

Among those who gave so much during my travels I am particularly grateful to William Wells, Jennie and James Long, Steve and Emily Plessner, Ty and Melissa Wyman, the Boman family, Amy and Phillip Mazzocco, Cherise Fanno, John “Tommy” Taylor, Cajardo Lindsey, Natalie Kroovand, John Garrish, the Desantis family, Alan Mobley, Christopher Zatzick, Stacey Empson, Philip and Bill Bergin, and Thomas Neese; and to Patricia Caswell for the burger run and for believing in my writing.

Over the past few years several mentors have dispensed honesty, wisdom, and encouragement as I have negotiated the treacherous terrain between science and art. They are Gilbert Geis, John Dombrink, Kip Schlegel, Steven Chermak, and Richard Warren Perry. Additionally, Edmund McGarrell, Alexander Weiss, Harold Pepinsky, and Philip Parnell have always taken the time to listen and to provide feedback.

John Woodcock deserves a special note for helping me embrace my voice by welcoming me, the “scientist,” into a creative nonfiction writing workshop way back when at Indiana University, Bloomington. Aimee Bender provided friendship and unwavering support for my style, and Bay Anapoul took time away from her own project to do impressive editing on early drafts. Literary agent Jennie

## Acknowledgments

- x McDonald generously offered critiques and advice as I tried to keep a wide audience in mind. Thanks to William Frohlich at Northeastern University Press for appreciating both the style and concept of the book.

In the midst of my writing, Randall Jackson often came to my aid with a basketball in hand and a good workout on his mind. He never tired of reading drafts, offering his printer, and listening. To Doug and Dana Welsh, Bill and Pamela Lindsay, Colleen Reilly, Paul Rader, Mike Ceely, and, yes, Karen Haubensak: your company and support accentuated life itself.

## Foreword

One week after returning to Ottawa from the 1998 annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology in Washington, D.C., former Carleton University sociologist Shahid Alvi and I decided to take a break from our work and visit our neighborhood pub. In spite of the cold November weather, we ventured outside and down the street to be with our own, so to speak, where we could exchange views on the current state of crime control and prevention in our community, in Canada, and in the United States. Over a mug, we talked of popular law and order crime-prevention strategies and their effects as we saw them. We set our minds once again to coming up with alternative strategies, ones that would reach out to the wider society. Our conversation was not optimistic. Shortly after this discussion, I received a copy of William DeLeon-Granados's *Travels through Crime and Place: Community Building as Crime Control*.

The time is indeed right for this book. *Travels through Crime and Place* is one of the most practical and innovative contributions to the understanding of crime control that I have ever read. It is "about alternatives"—not only to understanding the dynamics of social conflict, but also to scientific research methods that investigate them and criminal justice policies that attempt to address them. Why do I say this? DeLeon-Granados has traveled to communities of different sizes, permanence, and health in the United States to observe and to ask: "How does this community understand its conflicts? Who is working to stop crime here? How are they doing it?" The author explores well-publicized avenues of community policing and citizen-watch groups, but then probes ever deeper into what makes a cohesive, functioning community. "Is this community



brought together through its efforts or more divided along lines of race or age or politics? What still needs to be taken into account?" Police priorities and behavior are part of the solution, but so are urban design, people's attitudes toward the past, their patterns of consumption, even their own awareness of their power to achieve pragmatic solutions.

As it reaches across disciplines, *Travels through Crime and Place* points the way toward a new paradigm for ailing and disheartened neighborhoods. It suggests that a shared set of community values can be reached through exploration, give and take, and, finally, consensus among members. It raises the possibility of indigenous solutions—specific to a time and place, and developed from within the community itself, from its own agenda.

*Travels through Crime and Place* is also "about alternatives" in the way DeLeon-Granados uses personal narrative to present his observations throughout the book. In an age in which surveys and quantitative data analysis drive the bulk of North American criminological research, the author encourages us to seek a different route, one that takes people's personal experiences seriously. I am extremely impressed by this, and by the time and effort he devoted to talking to people across the United States. I'm sure that, regardless of their political, empirical, or theoretical orientation, many readers will find his storytelling approach to be so compelling that they will consider following in his footsteps.

In my own case, I'm deeply grateful to William DeLeon-Granados for rekindling my optimism and for taking me on a journey toward a new social order, one that promotes building communities. The depression that permeated my afternoon in the pub with Shahid is gone, owing in large part to reading this book. I hope that, you, too, will find it filled with "good news." The good news, as DeLeon-Granados powerfully points out, is that "people stop crime, specifically people who form cohesive, interdependent communities."

There is much more I can and would like to say about this book. However, I don't want to delay your own travels through crime and place. Still, one last comment is in order before you begin your

journey through the pages of this book. Be prepared for a reinvigoration of your imagination.

WALTER S. DEKESEREDY

*Carleton University*

*Ottawa, Canada*

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
To stop a crime, call a community	
<b>1. <i>Mayberry versus Starsky and Hutch</i></b>	<b>19</b>
Leadership striving to form community	
<b>2. No Humans Involved</b>	<b>34</b>
Policing with community in mind	
<b>3. Spy Shops and Nasty Old People</b>	<b>49</b>
Residents mobilizing with cops to build community	
<b>4. Incivilities and Shared Conceptions</b>	<b>69</b>
Is the community project doomed in our culture?	
<b>5. Scene of the Crime</b>	<b>85</b>
Designing space to evoke prosocial community behavior	
<b>6. New Urbanism</b>	<b>106</b>
Connecting ecology to form community	
<b>7. The Power of Connection</b>	<b>123</b>
Understanding participation and ties	

## **Contents**

<b>viii</b>	<b>8. Communitarianism</b>	<b>130</b>
	Using laws to fashion community	
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>145</b>
	Beyond myths of the past to other strategies	
	<b>Notes</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>Selected Bibliography</b>	<b>169</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>173</b>

## Travels through Crime and Place



# Introduction

## To stop a crime, call a community

We do not shape our policies to the mistaken and infantile notions of the man in the street. Our job is not to *ask* them what they think but to *tell* them!

—Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

**M**ore than a generation ago and a lifetime in the past, I spent my first seven years in a world quite apart from the one that most children who grow up in contemporary America experience. For a brief time, before booms in real estate, population, and employment changed a small town some fourteen miles north of San Francisco, California, it was as idyllic, safe, and nurturing as Andy Taylor's mythic Mayberry or George Bailey's Bedford Falls. Narrow neighborhood roads ringed a vibrant main street lined with the town hall, police and fire stations, a church, two bars, two small grocery stores, a theater, a restaurant, a boutique or two, a florist, and several other small businesses.

The butcher at the larger of the two grocers always knew to ask, "Two pounds of ground round today?" when some family member approached the counter with our weekly order. We neighborhood kids spent time in the store crouching on the musty wooden floors at the front, amid boxes and displays of candy. We contemplated, inspected, and weighed our purchases under the owner Sam's watchful eye. Sam often recommended one candy over another based on what he knew about each child's tastes and spending ability.

When we were not ogling candy, we kids freely roamed the streets, exploring, observing, and learning. We hiked through creeks and vacant lots. We visited with neighbors and with the weird but

4 | harmless-enough hippies who lived in tepees in a large redwood grove one block up from my house. We played hide-and-seek and jailbreak until Mom's familiar call filtered its way from the front stoop across the darkening neighborhoods to find us somewhere, finally tired and hungry but having too much carefree fun to have noticed.

In the mornings, after my sisters and brother went off to school (before I was old enough to attend), I explored the neighborhood on my own, sometimes hanging out with friends and sometimes spending the days with elderly neighbors. I once followed a utility company lineman on his rounds for a week, donning my leather cowboy boots to greet him each morning as he made his way up our block checking telephone pole connections. On other occasions I pedaled my scooter up to a nearby intersection and swaggered out into the middle, where I directed traffic for amused motorists.

When I began walking to school, I was routinely watched by two retired neighbors on the corner as I made my way up the three blocks to the school yard. On my return in the afternoon, a young woman who frequently sat on her porch reading would look up, wave at me, and say, "Hey, Charlie Brown," as she liked to call me. One sister spent many hours next door with a retired schoolteacher who taught her how to bake cookies, paint pictures, and garden. My brother spent most of his time down the block in a tree house with friends. If we dared speak a derogatory remark to town folk or contemplate and carry out some uncivil act, any adult was likely to correct us.

My forays into the intersection to direct traffic were in reverence to a world that deeply respected public-safety personnel and authority. We knew the names of nearly every police officer in town, and the few whom we saw as mean—the Barney Fifes who often followed the book too closely—were favorites at the dunk tank during the town's Fourth of July celebration. At night, the stillness was sometimes broken by a momentary ruckus as the town's firemen, all volunteers, jumped into their turnouts, dashed from their homes, and clumsily raced to the firehouse, their rubber boots making comforting clapping sounds against the pavement.

One particularly difficult winter around Christmastime, my



mother was struggling to make ends meet. She warned us kids that Santa Claus was not always able to visit every house. We were surprised on Christmas morning by a floor full of presents; years later I learned it was the firemen and police officers who had pitched in to buy them. When my mom could not find a baby-sitter for the five of us, her boss let her bring us to her job at the local theater, where we sometimes watched the same movie over and over.

My world was free from even the thought of crime. Everyone I came in contact with either was someone I knew or knew someone I knew. A stranger in this world would draw immediate attention. To us, strangers who offered candy to children were an abstraction known only to the fictional characters who appeared in grainy black-and-white educational films shown at school. My mother spent more time reminding us to respect neighbors than to watch out for molesters. The hippies down the block smoked something we did not know much about, but they never tried to offer any to us. They did, however, always provide us with pistachios, which we thought were the most exotic thing on earth. Gangs, drugs, pimps and prostitutes, child abductions, graffiti, and urban disorder were realities that would enter my world only after I left town.

That town in my past was a buffer against crime and provided support and nurture for my family. It offered close contact and bonding with people in the community, people I deeply respected. I never wanted to harm those people or cause them distress, because I could identify with them. The network in town transmitted norms about cooperation and provided communication about people who needed assistance. If something happened to someone, the town likely would come to know about it and would respond if needed.

Those characteristics that the small town demonstrated are what sociologist Robert Sampson and his colleagues refer to as “collective efficacy” in their recent landmark study based on a survey of Chicago neighborhoods. Neighborhoods rich in collective efficacy are sources for abundant informal social control, mutual trust, and cohesion. They are places where neighbors can depend on one another for help in times of crisis, and where the social capital of residents provides a powerful regulation of behavior. The good news is that *people* stop crime, specifically people who form cohesive,